Manzanar • Snowpack • Bouldering • Snow Camping • Real Estate Update

Mammoth Sierra

Spring 2014

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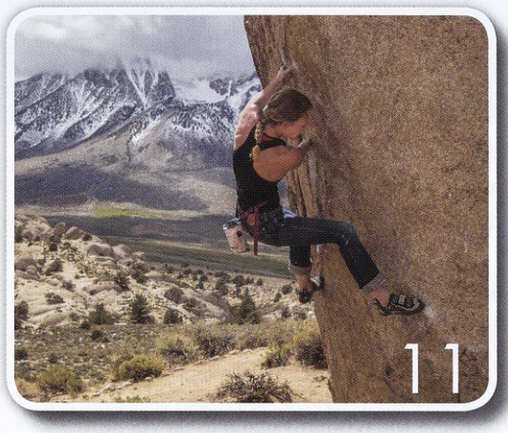
INSIDE Spring 2014



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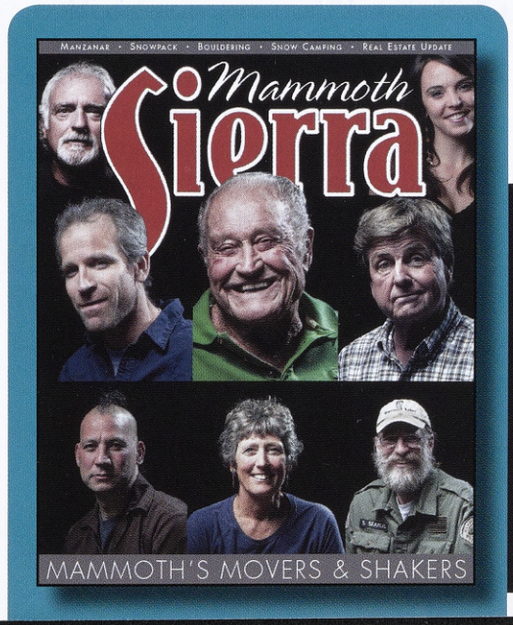
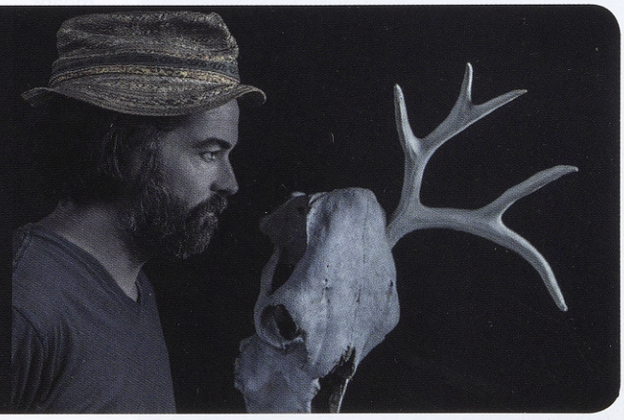


On the Cover:
A montage of some of Mammoth's "Movers & Shakers," by portrait photographer and Mammoth Lakes local Joel St. Marie.

Right:
Self portrait by Joel St. Marie.



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FROM THE EDITOR

There is more to a town than its elected officials, appointed leaders and/or the heads of special user groups. They may be public, but they don't define us, necessarily.

There are many more people whose force of personality and aesthetic sensibility give Mammoth its particular flavor.

It's the "it" that makes Mammoth the kind of place that it is, and we'd like to think that an indomitable individualism is at the heart of "it."

If you're looking for the common denominator in any of Joel St. Marie's gallery of Mammoth's "Movers & Shakers," that factor is good enough for us.

It's etched on the faces of Kathy Copeland, for example, and Christian Pondella. It's painted on the faces of people like Katie McWilliams and Michael Lish. Tim Alpers and Steve Searles wear their individualism like a suit of clothes, while people such as Corty Lawrence are so completely Mammoth that you really wouldn't think to ask them where they live.

At the center of it all is Dave McCoy, who invented Mammoth as we know it today.

This issue of the magazine is given over to those types of people—so infused with individualism that it practically drips off them.

It is not a complete portfolio, by any means.

In choosing our subjects, we worked with St. Marie to find the right combinations of old and new; women as well as men; and representatives of our wildness, inventiveness, athleticism, artistic psychology and the indefinable Mammoth gestalt that makes us bigger than the sum of our parts.

We also worked with St. Marie to find the best possible portraits, period.

Given the assignment, we chose John Wentworth, Joyce Turner and Dr. Pete Clark for special treatment on the inside of the magazine, while on the outside, we chose the following, from the top and left to right:

First, there is Corty Lawrence, expert boot fitter who is the face of Footloose Sports, an accomplished athlete and the son of the late Andrea Meade Lawrence, our most famous Olympic athlete.

Katie McWilliams came to us via Salt Lake City, by way of Alyeska, Alaska; and brought the town a new way to listen to new music on KMMT radio and enjoy new club performances with Fathead Productions. Like many of the people who give Mammoth its heart, she blew in like a whirlwind, and then blew on back to her native Georgia.

If there is a better action sports photographer on the planet than Christian Pondella, we have yet to see him or her.

Dave McCoy. Words fail us, but his portrait tells a thousand stories all by itself.

Tim Alpers is one of us—a lifer—who elevated trout fishing in the Eastern Sierra to a level never seen before.

Michael Lish is a relative newcomer, but brought us Community Skis, alongside the embodiment of how to "make it work" in a remote mountain ski town.

Kathy Copeland, a native Vermonter, came to Mammoth as an accomplished ski racer, possessed with an indefatigable sprit, an outsized personality and a drive that led her to create one of the most aggressive adaptive sports programs in the U.S.—Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra.

And finally, there is Steve Searles, the celebrated "Bear Whisperer," who teaches us how to co-exist with our wildlife and, perforce, each other.

We hope you like what we've done with this issue, and what St. Marie has done with his portraits.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

To submit calendar items for consideration, please email listings to george@mammothtimes.com.

Note: Please call or see websites to confirm details; life tends to change.

ONGOING

Skiing

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN SKI AREA. The winter (and spring) ski and snowboard playground boasts great terrain, plentiful snow, rails and pipes that attract the best riders, and one of the longest seasons anywhere. Get the complete rundown at mammothmountain.com or call 800-MAMMOTH.

JUNE MOUNTAIN SKI AREA. The new emphasis is on family-oriented skiing and snowboarding. Schuss on over to junemountain.com or call 800-MAMMOTH for more details.

Mono Lake

MONO LAKE COMMITTEE INFORMATION CENTER AND BOOKSTORE
Great local natural history book selection and information exhibit. Call 760-647-6595 for more info.

MONO BASIN NATIONAL FOREST SCENIC AREA VISITOR CENTER
Located 1/4 mile north of Lee Vining on U.S. 395, the Visitor Center is free and offers excellent interpretive and photo exhibits, a 20-minute film, a self-guided nature walk, bookstore, and ranger-led programs and tours. Call 760-647-3044 for more information.

Art/Galleries

BLUEBIRD IMAGING
Local artists are always on display in the gallery, and a variety of services (photography, digital imaging, etc.) are available. Now located in the Sierra Center Mall, 452 Old Mammoth Road.

INYO COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS
137 S. Main St., Bishop. More information at 760-873-8014 or visit www.inyo.org.

MAMMOTH GALLERY
This gallery packs a lot into a small space. On the walls are photographs by some of Mammoth's best nature photographers, as well as vintage ski photographs from the late "TJ" of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. Also on display are pottery, jewelry and home decor elements. The gallery specializes in custom framing. 501 Old Mammoth Rd., #7. More info at mammothgallery.com or by calling 760-934-4911 or (toll free) 888-848-7733.

Annual Pond Skim at Canyon Lodge

MONO COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS GALLERY
Located inside the Minaret Mall (Vons) between the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory and Tailwaggers. More information at www.monoarts.org/gallery.html.

MOUNTAIN LIGHT GALLERY
Galen and Barbara Rowell's photographic and environmental legacy lives on in Mountain Light. Travel the world through the Rowells' famous images, on permanent display. 106 Main St. (at Line). More info at 760-873-7700 and www.mountainlight.com.

Skateboarding

VOLCOM BROTHERS SKATE PARK
One of the biggest and smoothest skate parks in the U.S., off lower Meridian Blvd. near the Industrial Park. Helmets are required. For more info, call the Mammoth Parks and Recreation Department at 760-934-2712.

Fishing

OPENING DAY OF FISHING SEASON IN APRIL, MONO COUNTY. Call the California Department of Fish & Game at 760-872-1171 or visit www.dfg.ca.gov.

Golf

SIERRA STAR GOLF CLUB
Visit www.mammothmountain.com or call 760-924-2200.

SNOWCREEK GOLF COURSE
Visit www.snowcreekresort.com/golf or call 760-934-6633.

BISHOP COUNTRY CLUB
The 18-hole golf course is open year-round. Call 760-873-5828.

Museums/Exhibits

BODIE STATE HISTORIC PARK
A large, well-preserved gold mining town in "arrested decay," Bodie was once home to 10,000 people.

Continued on P. 6

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Felici Trio

Their ghosts are still alive and well here. On S.R. 270, 13 miles east of U.S. 395 (turnoff is 7 miles south of Bridgeport). Open daily all year. Call 760-647-6445 for the latest info or visit goo.gl/mFfYDr (case sensitive).

MANZANAR NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
Walk the grounds and visit this moving memorial to honor Japanese-Americans relocated here (and to other Western camps) during WWII. The Visitor Center offers free exhibits, a bookstore, and a 22-minute film. Located 6 miles south of Independence (9 miles north of Lone Pine) on U.S. 395. Open daily 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Visit www.nps.gov/manz/index.htm for more information.

OLD SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM & UPSIDE-DOWN HOUSE
Presented by the Mono Basin Historical Society and located in Mono Lake's Old School House, this museum displays both the commonplace and delightfully odd artifacts, photographs, books, maps and equipment chronicling the cultural history of the Mono Basin. Outside exhibits feature Nellie Bly's legendary Upside-Down House, along with farming and mining equipment. The museum is open through early October and the suggested donation per person is $2. For hours of operation and more information, visit monobasinhs.org.

LONE PINE FILM HISTORY MUSEUM
The Beverly and Jim Rogers Lone Pine Film History Museum, located at 701 South Main Street in Lone Pine, celebrates and preserves the diverse movie history of Lone Pine, Death Valley, and the Eastern Sierra. Visit lonepinefilmhistorymuseum.org for more information.

Hiking

SIERRA CLUB
The local Range of Light chapter leads hikes to some of the best-known and best-kept-secret places. Fun and fitness hikes scheduled each Thursday night at 5:30 p.m., with longer and more strenuous all-day outings on Sundays. Bring water, snacks, sunscreen, a hat, and your camera. Meet at the Union Bank parking lot, and check www.nevada.sierraclub.org for specific times and outing locations.

FRIENDS OF THE INYO
Visit friendsoftheinyo.org or call 760-873-6500 for full info on hikes to proposed wilderness areas and other special East side destinations.

March

1 CHAMBER MUSIC UNBOUND PRESENTS THE FELICI PIANO TRIO. The Felici Piano Trio and guests Josefina Vergara (violin) and Nico Abondolo (bass) present "Ticket to Ride" at Cerro Coso Community College in Mammoth, starting at 7:30 p.m. Music by Debussy and Vaughan Williams. For ticket pricing and availability, visit felicitrio.com or call 760-934-7015.

4 VILLAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

7-8 TAHOE ADVENTURE FILM FESTIVAL. The touring festival of the most extreme outdoor adventure footage you'll ever see returns for its fourth year in Mammoth. Promoter Todd Offenbacher will emcee this evening of high-octane footage. Showtimes at 7 p.m. both Friday and Saturday. Admission is $12/person. Visit edisontheatre.org.

8 THE UNBOUND SERIES—SKIER/BOARDERCROSS. This USASA sanctioned event is open to everyone. Lift ticket/pass required; USASA membership required (can be purchased at registration). Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

9 KITTREDGE FUN CUP. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

10-13 CALIFORNIA FIRE & POLICE OLYMPICS. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

14-16 USSA/FAR WEST U 12. Two SG races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY IN THE VILLAGE. For dining and shopping details, event calendars, and more, visit villageatmammoth.com or call 760-934-1982.

18 VILLAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

19-23 DISABLED SPORTS EASTERN SIERRA BIATHLON CAMP & MAMMOTH LAKES BIATHLON. Call Maggie Palchak at 760-934-0791 or e-mail mpalchak@disabledsportseasternsierra.org.

21-23 MAMMOTH LAKES BIATHLON. In its seventh year, Mammoth Lakes is hosting biathlon races over three days with races ranging from 1K to 10K. It takes place at Red's Lake at close to 9,000 feet making it the highest biathlon competition in the United States. Register at www.active.com or visit mammothvinterbiathlon.org.

MMSA Speed Series

21-23 MARCH MAGIC. The Edison Theatre opens its doors for a full weekend of magic! Come see masters of sleight-of-hand and illusion at 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 4 p.m. on Sunday. Admission TBA. Visit edisontheatre.org.

22 MIGHTY MITE WORLD CHAMPS. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

22 CHAMBER MUSIC UNBOUND PRESENTS THE FELICI PIANO TRIO. The Felici Piano Trio presents "Three of a Kind," with the music of Bach, Fauré, and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. at Cerro Coso Community College in Mammoth. For ticketing information, visit felicitrio.com.

22-23 FWRA, SOCALCS. Giant Slalom and Slalom races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

23 JUNIOR VILLAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS #3. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

25 VILLAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

27-29 OUTLAW SNOWDOWN. Call 800-MAMMOTH.

27-30 USSA/FAR WEST U 14 CHAMPIONSHIPS. SG, Giant Slalom, PSL, and Slalom races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

28-29 FAR WEST MASTERS FINALS. One Giant Slalom and two Slalom races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

April

TBA, GULL LAKE FISH OF THE MONTH DERBY, JUNE LAKE. Call the June Lake Chamber of Commerce at 800-845-7922.

3-13 SLEUTH, EDISON THEATRE. This Tony Award-winning play by Anthony Shaffer presents the ultimate game of cat and mouse played out in the house owned by mystery writer Andrew Wyke, whose guest Milo Tindle is a rival for Wyke's livelihood and for his wife. Revenge and murder is plotted as the two devise the ultimate whodunit. Performances Thursday through Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m. Admission $20/$18/$10. Visit edisontheatre.org.

4-6 FWRA FINALS. PACESETTER, SLALOM, AND GIANT SLALOM RACES. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

4-9 WESTERN REGION FIS ELITE SPEED SERIES. Two downhill races and two SG races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

11-13 MAMMOTH INVITATIONAL. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

11-13 USSA/FAR WEST U 14/U 12 SPEED RACE. Two SG races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

16 TAMARACK CROSS-COUNTRY SKI CENTER CLOSING DAY. Call 760-934-2442 or visit tamaracklodge.com/ski_center.

19 MMST MOGUL BASH. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

19-20 EASTER PARADE AND CELEBRATIONS AT THE VILLAGE. For dining and shopping details, event calendars, and more, visit villageatmammoth.com or call 760-934-1982.

19-20 SCCSC COLLEGE EVENTS. Giant Slalom and Slopestyle races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

19-24 USSA/FAR WEST SPEED FINALS. Three SG races and three downhill races. Call 800-MAMMOTH or the Mammoth Mountain Race Department at 760-934-2571 ext. 3242.

20 ANNUAL POND SKIM, CANYON LODGE. 800-MAMMOTH.

24 MONO COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS OPENER OF FISHING SEASON DINNER. Visit monoarts.org.

26 FISHMAS AT THE VILLAGE. Visit villageatmammoth.com or call 760-934-1982.

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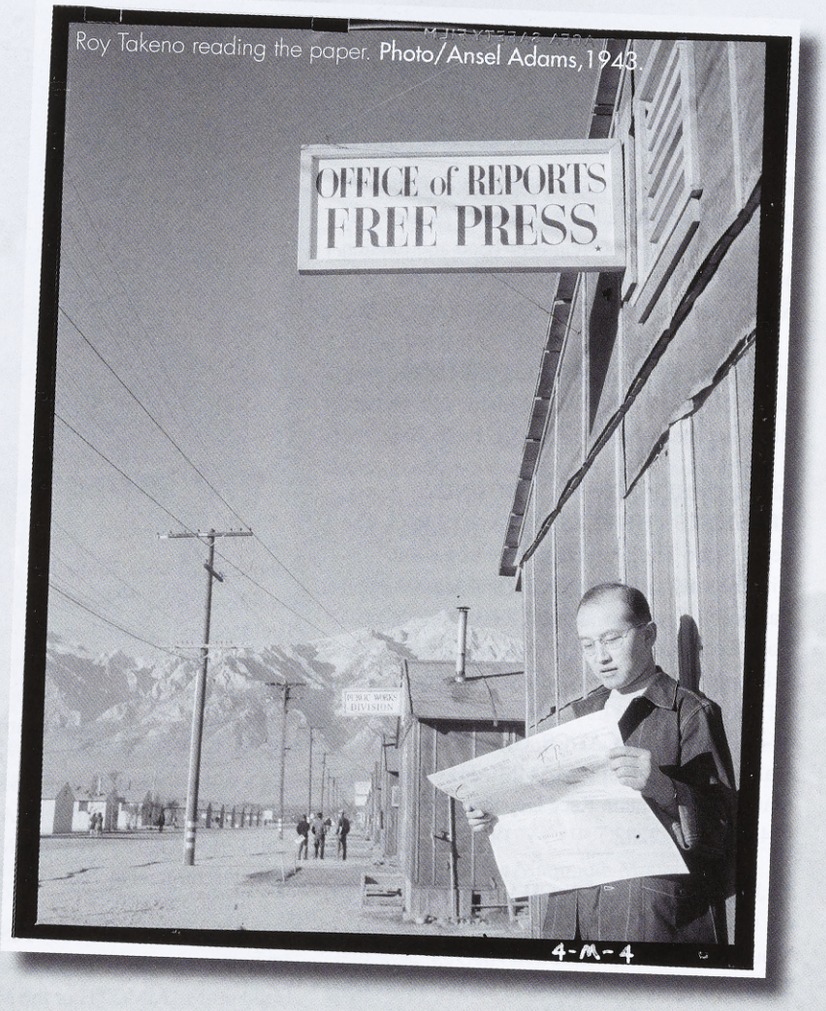
MANZANAR— LIFE AS USUAL IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP

The power of rewriting our own history



Roy Takeno reading the paper. Photo/Ansel Adams,1943.

Story by **Lyra Pierotti**

It's springtime and the air is thick with the smell of jasmine.

The sun shines brightly on the landscape, drowning the desert in a flood of light. The vegetation is sparse, but it manages to hide the ruins—except here, in the remains of Merritt Park, at the Manzanar War Relocation Center.

Walking toward the bridges, lonely over the dry ponds, the pungent blossoms bring the scene to life as the air fills my lungs. I wonder how many came here to do the same—to breathe.

"Three years went pretty fast. I had no regrets," said Stephen Shinto. "I'm sorry we had to go through some of these things, especially for the people who lost their businesses and lost their homes. But it could've been much worse."

Shinto was 14 years old when his family was uprooted and moved from their home in downtown Los Angeles to the desert landscape of Manzanar. He was there until 1945, graduating from high school in Manzanar—and on the first bus out when the camp closed.

Though he didn't understand why he was there, the teenager was preoccupied with life as usual. There were school dances and basketball games; he learned how to grow celery and strawberries on the camp's acres of farmland; and he was a cub reporter for the Manzanar Free Press.

Then Shinto seamlessly shifted conversation to his life after camp. At first, he wanted to study journalism, but as he returned home, he developed an interest in how people develop, so he studied sociology and anthropology at UCLA and CSU Los Angeles.

Eventually, he got into sales and realized he had talent as a salesman. He drew the designs for the first bobblehead doll, and the L.A. Rams placed an order for $63,000—at a cost of 25 cents per doll, that was a lot of bobble.

Shinto went on to start other companies, selling everything from handmade products to apparel, and rubbing elbows with prominent figures in the field, from San Francisco to New York.

Life went on, and for Shinto, it was a good one. Eventually he would have a son in Los Angeles who started to visit the Eastern Sierra. His grandson now lives in Bishop, whom I would eventually meet and learn about the family's roots in Manzanar. He told me his grandfather didn't really like to talk about his time in the camp.

"Japanese culture is very shameful," said Gann Matsuda, a member of the Manzanar Committee. "They just want to survive and not dwell on the past."

The Manzanar Committee's mission is to educate and raise public awareness about the incarceration and violation of civil rights of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II, and to the continuing struggle of all peoples when Constitutional rights are in danger.

As such, the Committee organizes an annual Pilgrimage to Manzanar to raise awareness to the issue.

"It's a shameful part of our history," Matsuda said, "but it is our history, as Americans."

Matsuda said he hopes by raising awareness to the violations of civil rights, they will help ensure it is never repeated. After all, he said,

Left: A pool in the park at the Manzanar Relocation Center. **Right:** Mrs. Naguchi and two children at the Manzanar Relocation Center. **Photos by Ansel Adams, 1943. • Background image:** A dust storm at the Manzanar Relocation Center. **Photo Dorothea Lange, 1942**

over two-thirds of the 120,000 people slated for "relocation" after the bombing at Pearl Harbor were native born American citizens.

Today, Matsuda said, they use the word "incarcerated."

Even the name, the Manzanar War Relocation Center, sounds like a summer camp, he said.

As a student in Manzanar, Shinto met students from all over the United States—from southern California to Chicago. People met and were married in the camp—one couple even said if not for Manzanar, they would never have met.

For a brief moment, Shinto dips into the subject of strife in camp. Members of the Japanese American Citizens League, "true blue American citizens," as he described them, were resented by the "pro-Japanese" incarcerees. In the famous Manzanar Riot on Dec. 5 and 6, 1942, two incarcerees were shot and killed by military police. Nine other prisoners and one police corporal were wounded as well.

Overall, however, the camp's administrators were kind and "very fair-minded," Shinto said. They assured him his stay was temporary.

"I had no reason to resent anyone, other than the fact that I was there," he said.

Shinto never thought about how long he would be in Manzanar. He said nothing of pain or inhumanity, save the simple statement: "I wouldn't want to go through it again."

In the years to follow, many students of Japanese heritage wouldn't learn anything about Manzanar and the relocations until they got to college, Matsuda said.

"In addition to being shameful," he said, "it's also very painful—especially after 70-something years."

While the Manzanar Committee is focused on raising awareness to prevent a repeat of history, noting the plight of Muslim citizens today, Matsuda recognizes that this history runs far deeper than World War II and the Japanese incarcerations.

All of the relocation centers, for example, were technically on Native American land—at some point, it all was stolen.

Manzanar's story reads like many of America's tragedies: A veritable paradise, where nearly 2,000 native people had lived for at least 600 years. They inhabited camps by many of the Sierra streams, and lived off the local plants and wildlife.

Miners and ranchers then started to filter into the Owens Valley in the late 1800s, claiming homesteads and grazing cattle in the grasslands that had sustained the natives for generations.

The Owens Valley Paiute, as the white settlers called them, became desperate as winter approached, raiding ranches and stealing cattle. The U.S. Army moved in to settle the problem, removing nearly 1,000 of the natives and forcing them to march 200 miles across the desert to Fort Tejon.

With the problem forcibly removed, white settlers expanded their ranches and built beautiful, elaborate homes. As the natives slowly drifted back into the area, they had little choice but to take work on the ranches that had displaced them.

John Shepherd's 1,300-acre ranch was one of the most prominent, and contained much of the land that would later become the Manzanar War Relocation Center.

Clockwise from top left: Grandfather and grandson of Japanese ancestry at Manzanar Relocation Center. • The first grave at the Manzanar Relocation Center cemetery. It is that of Matsunosuke Murakami, 62, who died of heart disease on May 16, 1942. Ill ever since he arrived in Manzanar with the first contingent, he had been confined to the hospital since March 23. • The space in the foreground is a wide fire-break between blocks of barracks at the Manzanar Relocation Center, which also served as a playfield. **Photos by Dorothea Lange, 1942**

In the early 1900s, developers got a hold of the land and repurposed it as a fruit-growing colony. Hence the name Manzanar: Spanish for "apple orchard."

But their time was limited, too. The Los Angeles Aqueduct was finished in 1913, and the city continued to grab water rights until they effectively owned all of Manzanar: its orchards and water rights.

By 1935, everyone had left the little town of Manzanar.

Then, with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor came the hysteria over ethnic Japanese in America.

The isolated Owens Valley became one of several sites selected for the incarceration of ethnic Japanese. Within a few years, over 10,000 people of Japanese descent found themselves "evacuated" to this desert prison, leaving ghost towns and boarded up shops and restaurants in the wake, many unable to sell or tie up loose ends before being removed to Manzanar.

When Shinto returned home to Los Angeles with his parents, Little Tokyo was little more than a ghost town. The restaurant his parents had owned and operated before the evacuation, often frequented by Hollywood folk, was lost.

"People were trying to get settled," Shinto said. "We had no place to go back to."

There was a boarding house in L.A. that took in incarcerees from many of the camps who wanted to make their way out west. Shinto's father and mother became caretakers and cooks for the residents, mostly gardeners.

Shinto went to college.

Life went on.

As I closed up my notes, Stephen and I got to chatting about why I called him, what I planned to write about. I told him I was fascinated by the history of a place so many drove by en route to various mountain escapades—a place with an important and dark past.

I said I came here for the mountains; that I felt free in this landscape, but I wondered what it was like to be forced to live there—if the purple mountain majesties and spacious skies were, for him, oppressive.

Taking a deep breath, the smile on his face audible, he told me how glad he was that I was interested in this history—still offering no real response, hardly even an inkling of an implication.

Just before saying goodbye, he paused to recount one memory—one thing, he said, that really struck him. Searching for the name of the mountain just west of Manzanar, I offered, "Mt. Williamson."

Yes, that was it—Mt. Williamson.

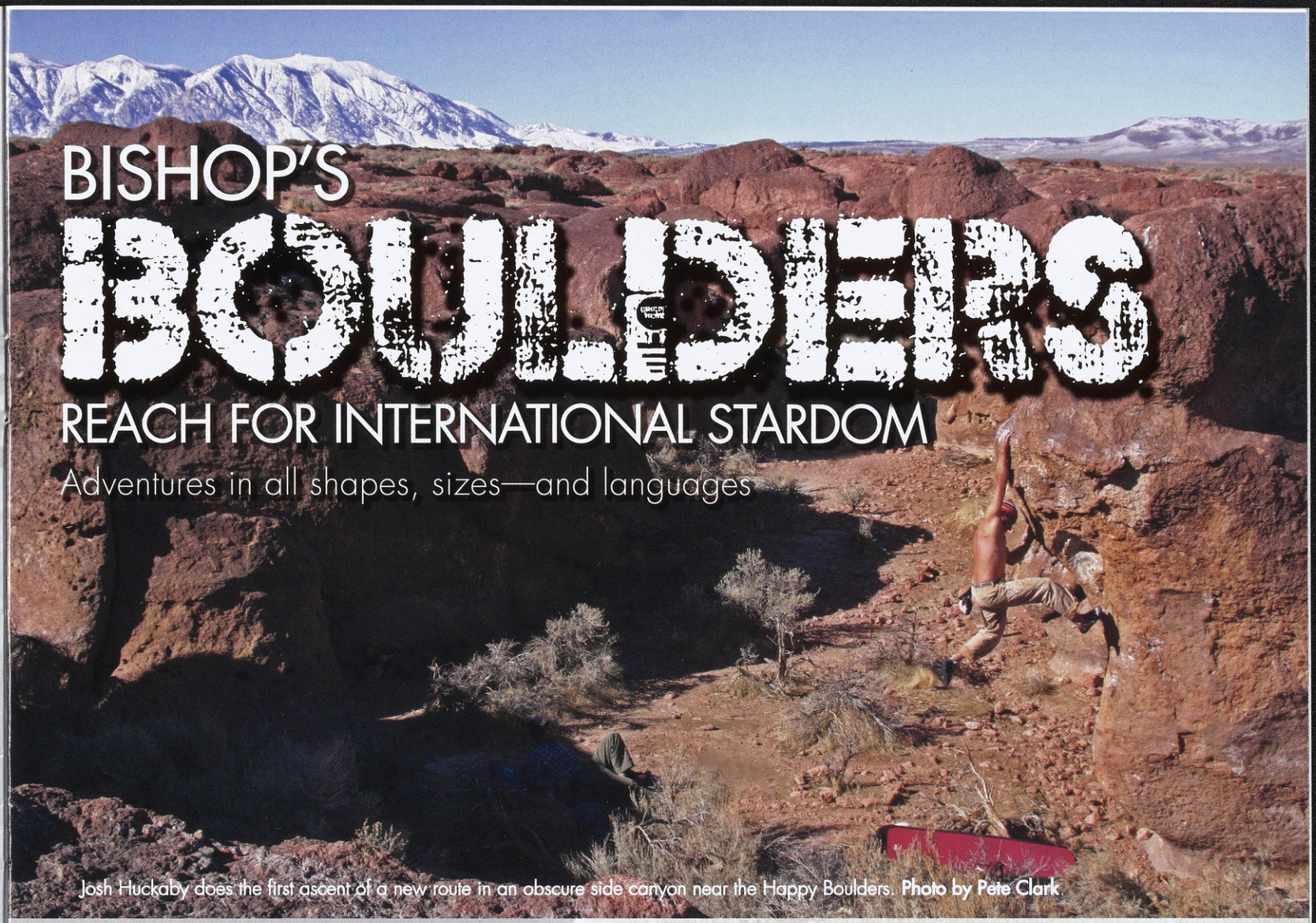
He sighed.

"Even in the hottest part of summer," he said, his voice catching, "that mountain still had snow on it."

BISHOP'S BOULDERS

REACH FOR INTERNATIONAL STARDOM

Adventures in all shapes, sizes—and languages



Josh Huckaby does the first ascent of a new route in an obscure side canyon near the Happy Boulders. **Photo by Pete Clark**

Story by **Lyra Pierotti**

"Allez! Allez!"

"Venga! Venga!"

"Come on, dude, come on!"

T-shirts appearing on climbers all around Bishop say it all: "Paris, London, New York, Bishop."

Bishop is on the map for climbers of every provenance; the accents and languages drifting around the boulders indicate only a few, as the melting pot of international climbing culture swirls around a few favorite words—"dude" often one of the most prominent.

It's like a monosyllabic test drive of American culture.

"There are really a lot of nationalities you can run into at the boulders," said Sandra Sommer, a 37-year-old German climber who relocated to Bishop in 2009.

Her first trip to Bishop was to visit some old friends from Germany who had come for the iconic boulders. Not long after, she quit her microbiology post-doc in Oregon to travel. First stop: Bishop. She met a man in Bishop, left to travel more, but ended up coming back for him.

She never would have stayed just for the climbing, but she said Bishop "is a place I can call home."

Sommer now works at the local bookstore and the café, and volunteers at the hospital where she hopes to eventually work in the lab.

Most of all, she appreciates the variety in Bishop—but not just climbing-wise. When she first came to the Eastside, she was mostly into roped climbing, but found myriad other activities to keep her interested.

That first visit was in February when the nights were cold but the days sunny, and she and her friends passed the hours bouldering at the Druids, the Buttermilks, and the Tableland.

Then comes the summer and fall—time for hiking and running in the mountains.

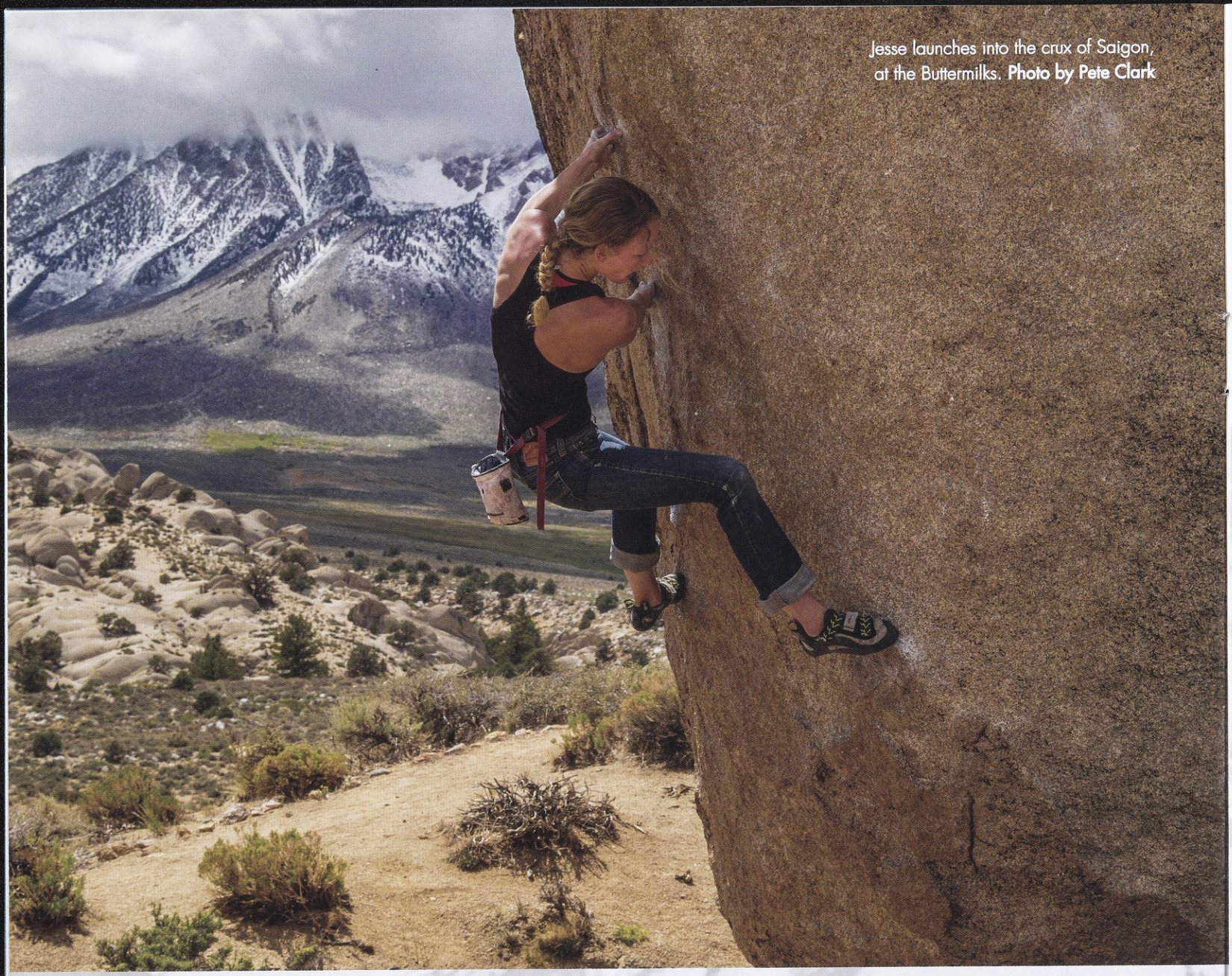
"You can make a quick trip to Death Valley," she said—or Mono Lake or Tuolumne Meadows.

"I have periods where I don't climb that much. Bishop allows that because there are many other things to do," she said.

Sommer said she also appreciates the diverse community of Bishop, especially for its small size. There are old ranchers, average Joes, folks who come for the mountains. As a volunteer at the hospital, she meets people who come for many reasons—sometimes just because they like the desert.

"What makes Bishop unique to me is there is so much accessible in a short amount of time," she said. In just a short 20-minute drive, you can get out and do whatever you want to do that day.

"You're in a highly populated country but you can go out into the desert and be alone."



Jesse launches into the crux of Saigon, at the Buttermilks. **Photo by Pete Clark**

Her favorite, however, remains the Buttermilk boulders—for the scenery, the setting, and the uniqueness of the place.

"You see the mountains, it's quiet most of the time," she laughed, excepting the busy weekends. "You get there, and you're just really happy to be there."

Sommer said she considers herself lucky to have been so graciously welcomed into the community. Many international visitors, she said, just stay for 2-3 months, usually starting sometime in October.

Like that group of French mountain guides who seem to pop up every other fall or so.

For Frenchman Julian Breuil, who is nearing completion of his international guiding certification, the Buttermilks are, in the climber-dialect of this Grenoblois, "mythique"—mythical.

Breuil's laundry list of likes gives him time to reminisce.

"The beautiful globes of granite with sharp edges require little adjustment; the big American landscape is unlike anything in France; there is amazing camping right next to the boulders; there's the cool climbing atmosphere, kind of like California surf culture; and those scary high-ball boulder problems."

Those, of legend and myth.

"If you're asking a visiting climber why he likes Bishop," he added, "and you live there, you must already have the answer."

Known among climbers in France, Bishop's boulders have appeared in various French climbing-specific media, from magazines to videos.

"The French say that if you don't like the bouldering in Bishop, it's because you don't truly love rock climbing," said Nils Guillotin, a French rock guide and accomplished dirtbag.

His fascination with Bishop's boulders echo his compatriot's.

"It's the beauty of the setting, the ambiance, the quality of the rock, and the form of the boulders."

After eight years, Eduardo Carvalho uses the same language.

He said he first came to Bishop in September of 2003 after winning a national climbing competition in Brazil. The prize was a trip to the U.S. At first, the travel agency booked him a flight to Miami, but he talked

them into a flight to L.A.—it was a prize for climbing after all, he said, and there is no climbing in Miami.

He spoke no English and his only reference was the address of a climbing gym in L.A. that he found on the back of one of his American climbing magazines. Eventually, he worked his way from L.A. to Bishop, known in Brazil for the bouldering—but he said he didn't know it came with the whole Sierra package.

There was everything from bouldering to sport climbing, to alpine and big wall climbing.

"I didn't even know how close Yosemite was when I first came here."

Climbing was far less developed in Brazil, and Carvalho said he was pleased at the progress he made while climbing in Bishop. At home, he said, "If I wanted to go climbing, I had to go exploring for hours."

He finally moved to Bishop in 2006—for a boulder problem named Kelley, he said jokingly. First drawn to the area by the climbing, he ultimately stayed for a woman. In the past couple of years, he has suffered injuries and has had to scale his climbing back a little. He has grown to appreciate the easier problems.

For him, going out bouldering is like a city man taking a walk in the park. He takes only his shoes and chalk, no need for a cumbersome bouldering pad if he stays on the easier boulders, and then heads home to his wife and 6-year-old son.

Now spending more time on the easier circuit, Carvalho said he thinks the hard problems at the Buttermilks are not representative of the overall style—they're pure power problems.

He tells the story of Daniel Woods, currently one of climbing's stronger boulderers. He sent The Mandala, an iconic and coveted hard boulder problem in the Buttermilks, on his second try. Then he went over to a supposedly much easier problem called Pope's Prow, a strange and technical scoop of rock, and it took him 45 minutes to get it.

Carvalho said he appreciates the variety of rock types around Bishop—far more varied than most places, with a range of volcanic and granitic rocks in a relatively small area. The Buttermilks, however, remains his favorite.

It's at the base of the Sierra, for one thing; but it's also the shape of the boulders that draws him. They're like big eggs, he said: Steep and overhanging at the bottom, low-angled slabs at the top, no giant holds to grasp to throw yourself over the lip of the boulder; the climbing is technical and requires finesse.

As such, the Buttermilks has become increasingly busy over the years, and on some holiday weekends, usually in the late fall or early winter, there might be so many cars parked that the area is practically encircled by Tacomas, weird old vans with homemade pop-tops, rows of dusty Subarus, and the odd shiny sedan on its maiden Eastside voyage.

Sommer, however said he, likes to get away from the crowds, and finds plenty of space to do so. You won't find her cheering from that migrating mob of boulderers.

"I usually try not to yell," she said. But when she does offer her friends words of encouragement, it's usually in her very lightly accented English: "Come on!" For her, it's easiest not to switch between English and German all the time.

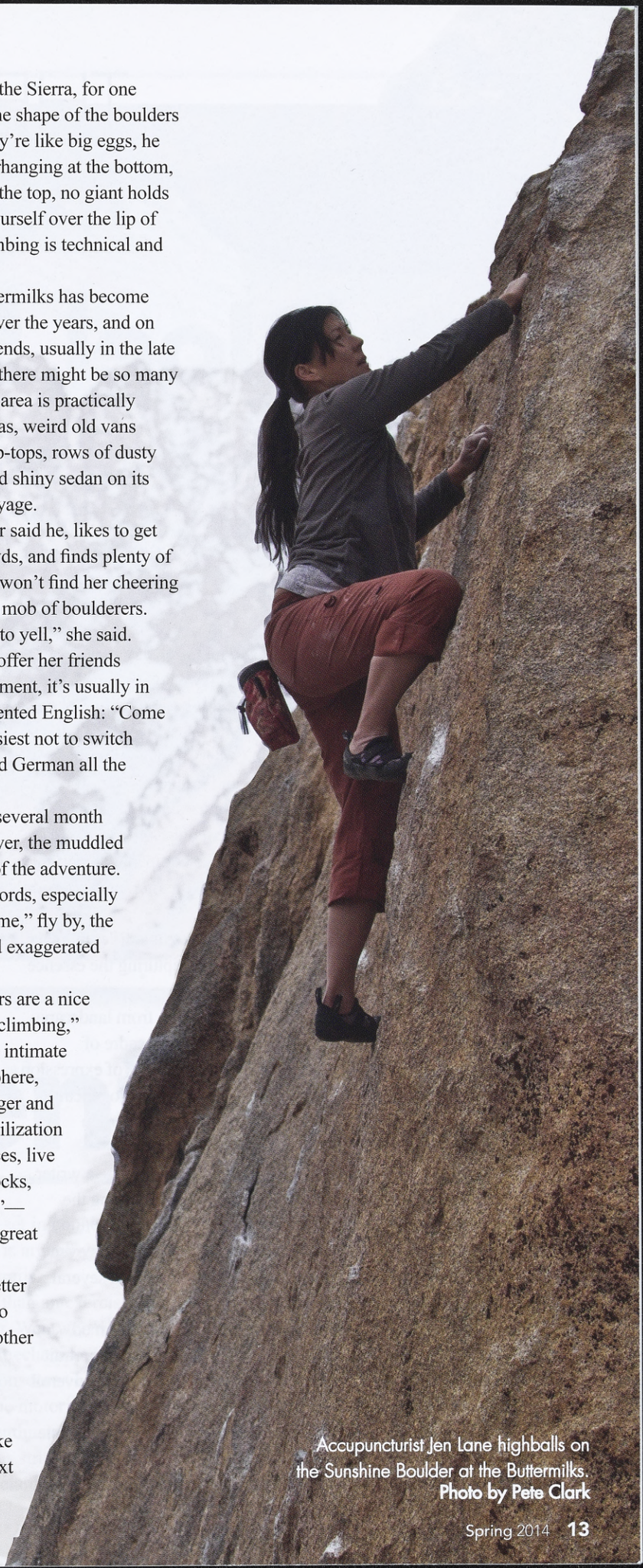
For visitors on a several month long journey, however, the muddled languages are part of the adventure. Heavily accented words, especially "dude" and "awesome," fly by, the vowels rounded and exaggerated by foreign mouths.

"Bishop's boulders are a nice change from roped climbing," said Breuil, "for the intimate and friendly atmosphere, the lazy days, to linger and disconnect from civilization in the big open spaces, live like a hobo in the rocks, and joke in English"—something he takes great pride in.

"Bad jokes are better from a Frenchie who has surely made another syntax error."

"Come on, dood! Allez!"

With an accent like that, he might be next to relocate.



Accupuncturist Jen Lane highballs on the Sunshine Boulder at the Buttermilks. **Photo by Pete Clark**

THE FACES OF MAMMOTH

Joel St. Marie's

'Movers and Shakers' project

Story by George Shirk
Photos by Joel St. Marie

Sitting for a portrait with Joel St. Marie can be as complicated or as easy as you want it, or as he wants it. The Mammoth-based photographer, who lives in Swall Meadows and manages the Mammoth Gallery, is a comfortable guy, easy to be around, and frequently very funny. He skis, and backcountry skiing is his passion. In the warm weather, he rides an older-vintage Honda motorcycle to work. His laugh is disarming, accompanied by bright eyes that on most days seem to be fastened on the mountains outside the gallery's windows.

But when it comes to his photography, he goes to a different place, trying to capture the essence of the person. By capturing the essence of the person, he has captured Mammoth.

Although he works in other photography genres, from landscape to weddings, he is the first among Mammoth's large cadre of photographers to go heavily into portraiture as a means of expression.

"It all really started by accident," he says, almost apologetically. "I had an idea to make a picture of a particular person here in Mammoth, but make it a picture of what he was all about."

In this case, his idea was to somehow capture a person—a writer, this case—doing what he does. The puzzle was in capturing the subject as the subject was in mid-thought.

This is a long way from action sports photography. It was even further from the classic landscape photography for which several Eastside photographers are justifiably well regarded.

"I wanted to capture who the person really is," he explained.

But as the number of portraits began to build, with each portrait able to stand on its own, St. Marie found he was building an overall portrait of Mammoth itself—not through images of mountains, climbers, snowboarders and skiers, but through the faces of people who have helped make Mammoth distinguishable from any other place, it's people.

He calls his project "Movers & Shakers," and the subjects range from the more obvious people, such as Mammoth Mountain Ski Area founder Dave McCoy, to the more obscure personalities around here—a journalist; an editor of an alternative weekly; the founder and driving force behind the town's disabled sports program; a co-founder and business woman who, with her husband, is behind the Mammoth Brewing Company.

With the body of work building as it is, a casual observer might think St. Marie knows just about everybody in the little mountain hamlet, but he doesn't.

After each sitting, he asks his subject to nominate another person, creating a loosely connected web of personalities.

As if to accentuate the person rather than the place, St. Marie places each subject in front of a black background, makes a series of shots, carefully using studio lights to create the image.

The process, he said, can sometimes be difficult, with some subjects unsure of what the project is all about and others who may be affected, for better or for worse, by their own sense of vanity.

"What I want you to do," he said to one of his subjects, "is to face 'this' way, but look 'that' way. Now I want you to think of something funny. Now I want you to look thoughtful."

And so it goes. Click-click-click.

What emerges from St. Marie's camera and resulting print goes to the very heart of portraiture—a subject that has fascinated Western artists since the Ancient Egyptians first started placing portraits of their gods on everything from buildings to chalices.

Aristotle himself wrote about the difficulty of the process:

"The aim," he wrote, "is to present not the outward appearance of things, but their inner significance; for this, not the external manner and detail, constitutes true reality."

For the modern sensibility, portraiture might be an Andy Warhol portrait of Marilyn Monroe; or one of Annie Leibovitz's now-famous portraits, in Rolling Stone magazine, of Mick Jagger, Joan Armatrading or John Lennon.

In Mammoth, where outsized personalities match the mountains, St. Marie has fastened upon a cluster of personalities who make Mammoth what it is—the movers and shakers, if you will.

JohnWentworth

It's hard to imagine what Mammoth's trails would look like without John Wentworth, the president of the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation.

The former filmmaker, whose credits involve working alongside David Lynch ("Twin Peaks"), and a co-producing, with Lynch, the 2001 film "Mulholland Dr.," Wentworth entered the Mammoth scene in 2000 with a bucket load of ideas, along with an innate skill set in connecting all the players in what is arguably Mammoth's greatest asset—its trails.

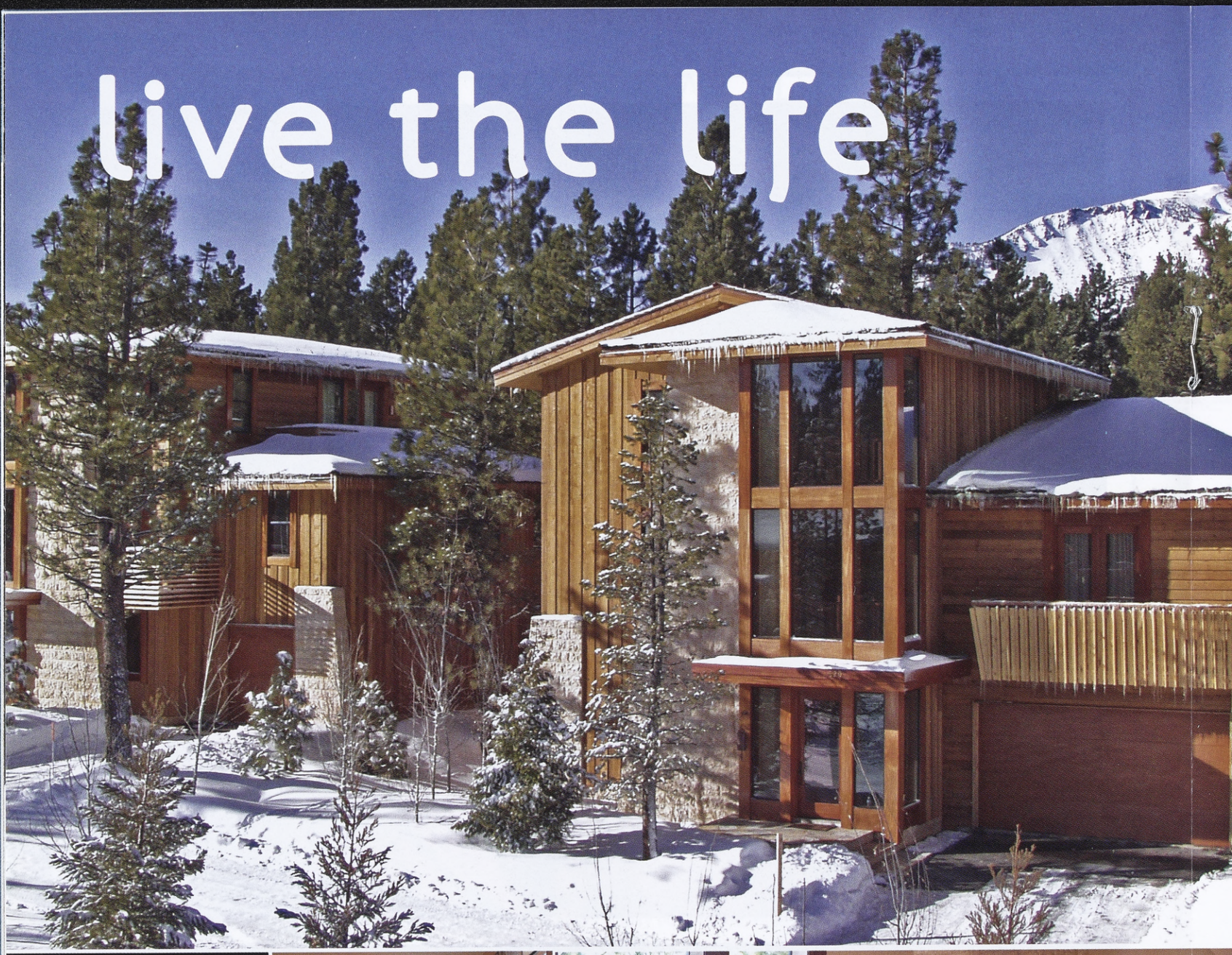
It has been more than an exercise in herding cats. Rather, Wentworth has relentlessly built a mechanism for the players to build a consensus base for themselves, from the motorized sports crowd to the quiet sports enthusiasts.

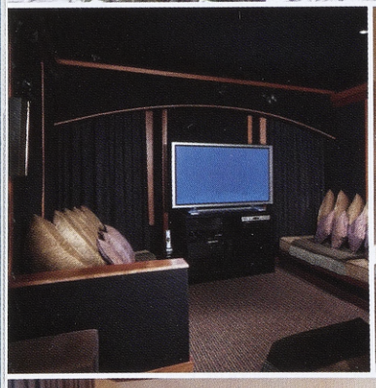
In so doing, he has straddled the fine line between public officialdom and the kind of polarizing forces that historically have separated Mammoth's user groups.

In years to come, when people encounter such things as good interpretive trail mapping, stewardship public lands, digital connectivity for information and mapping, it will have Wentworth's influence all over it.

A superb backcountry skier and athlete, Wentworth also comes equipped with that most rare of policymaking traits: a disarming, hilarious sense of humor.

live the life





TALLUS

MAMMOTH LAKES, CALIFORNIA

HOMES AND MEMBERSHIPS FOR SALE

Tallus is the only member owned private ski and golf residence club in Mammoth Lakes, California. Ownership at Tallus ensures an unrivaled Mountain experience.

As an owner at Tallus your family and friends will enjoy 5,000 feet of tranquil living space, radiant heated floors throughout, and a gourmet kitchen with professional Viking appliances. Each home has 4 to 5 bedrooms with attached bathrooms. Your guests and family will be able to relax in a dedicated media screening room or your large private spa.

Tallus owners and their guests enjoy the yearly benefits of 10 all access Mammoth Black Passes, 2 memberships to the Sierra Star Golf Club, Private Shuttle, on-site Concierge Services and so much more.

We invite you to experience the extraordinary. Schedule a preview stay and you will live the life at Tallus like an owner. Please contact us for availability - info@tallus.com.

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Joyce Turner

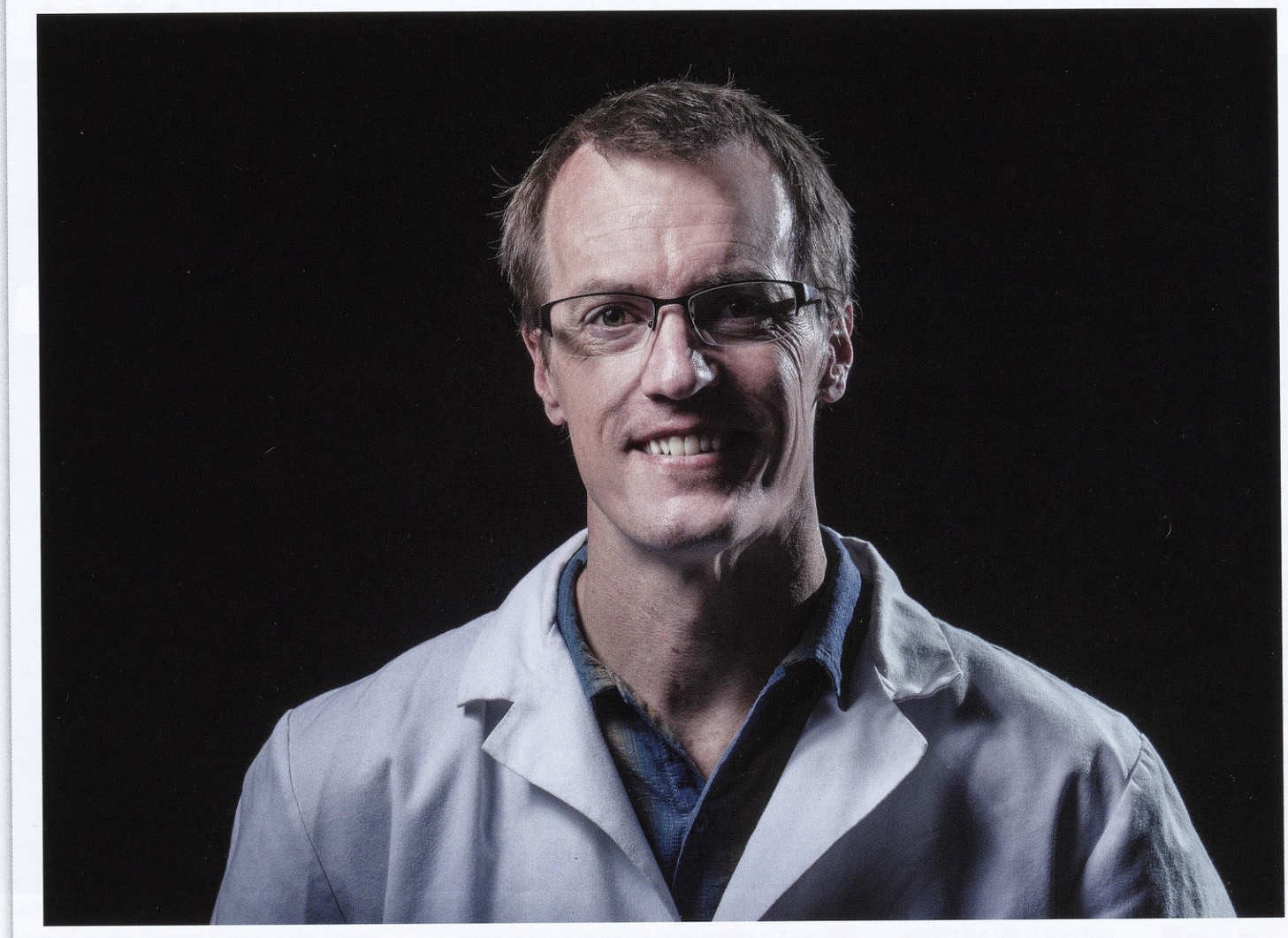
Joyce Turner is the half-owner, with her husband Sean, of one of Mammoth's most successful home-grown businesses—Mammoth Brewing Co. Inc.

While Sean Turner is very much a public figure, occupying a seat on the Mammoth Lakes Recreation Commission as well as the Mammoth Lakes Trails Coordinating Committee, Joyce works more behind the scenes, helping grow Mammoth Brewing into a singular, Only-in-Mammoth business.

For the past year, Joyce has led the Turners' efforts in expanding their brewing operations to include Bishop, where they have been moving forward toward an overall brewing boost to include the huge micro-brew market in Southern California.

She also is an active partner with Sean in producing Mammoth's biggest summer event, the Mammoth Festival of Beers and Bluesapalooza.

A full-time mom, too, she has become an integral force in Mammoth.



Dr. Pete Clark

If you're an athlete—isn't everyone in Mammoth an athlete?—you have run across Dr. Pete Clark at one time or another.

Maybe it has been while traipsing through the backcountry on a summer's day; perhaps on the ski hill or your favorite telemarking slope.

Or, perhaps, you just run into Pete because it's time for an annual checkup at Mammoth Hospital's Family Medicine Clinic.

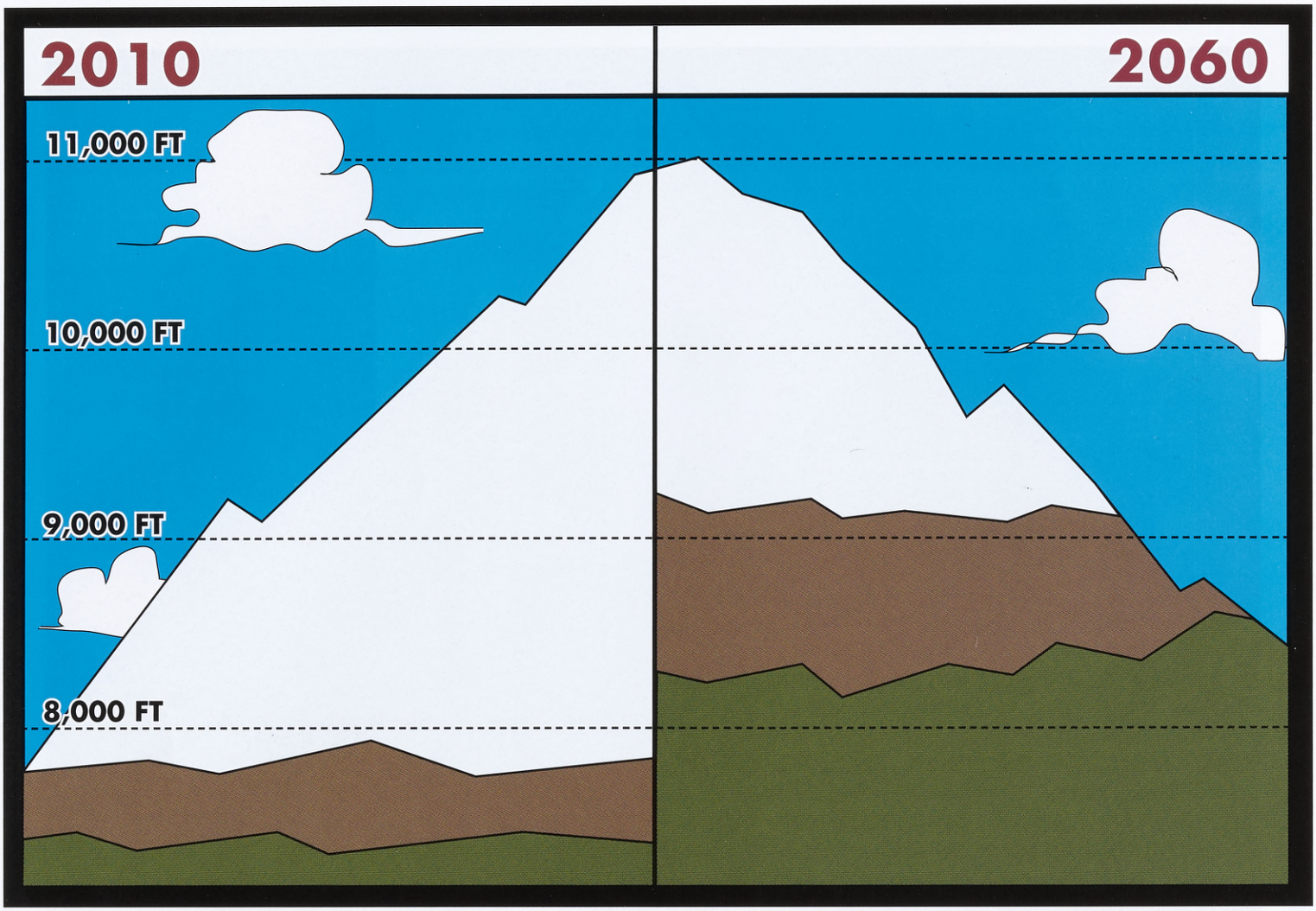
In all the aforementioned cases, though, you know you've run into someone who shares a love of the outdoors with the specialized medical knowledge of wellness and, in dire cases, direct fix-you-up medicine.

Clark moved to Mammoth from Colorado in 1999. He is a graduate of UC Davis, Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans, and St. Mary's Family Medicine Residency in Grand Junction, Colo.

His interests and areas of expertise include sports medicine, and preventative medicine. He is a team physician for the United States Ski and Snowboard Association and has traveled with U.S. Snowboarding to international World Cups as well as providing domestic support.

Dr. Clark operated the Olympic Village medical clinic at the Torino 2006 Olympics, and is a U.S. Olympic Committee Physician. He is a clinical assistant professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, and a U.S. Cycling coach.

His interests and areas of expertise include sports medicine, preventative medicine, and weight management. Dr. Clark also enjoys travel and wilderness medicine. In the past, he has been involved with hypothermia research, and has worked on the Navajo and Makah reservations in Telluride and Copper Mountain, Colo.



Where'd the snow go?

A half century from now, Mammoth Mountain and the Eastern Sierra will look very different

Story by **Wendilyn Grasseschi**
Illustration by **Jesse Barlet**

Barely a half century from now—unless 99 percent of climate scientists are wrong—Mammoth Mountain's famed 3,100 foot run from the Top of the Sierra at Mammoth's summit to Eagle Lodge will be about 1,500 feet less.

In the year 2060, the Town of Mammoth Lakes will likely see very little snow—it will be too warm—and instead, when precipitation comes, it will come as rain.

Many of the pines that carpet the lower reaches of the mountain and town will struggle, fighting a bark beetle infestation that is exacerbated by the warmer winters; winters that now allow the little insects to thrive, instead of dying in minus zero temperatures.

Fourty-six years from now, Crowley Lake will have the climate of Bishop.

If that sounds depressing, that's too bad.

The best available science doesn't care.

Unless something completely unforeseen happens—and it might—the global climate is warming, and warming fast.

While politicians and priests might argue if and why, science points the bulk of the blame straight at the last century of man-made carbon emissions created from burning immense amounts of fossil fuels. The carbon is dumped and trapped in the upper atmosphere, preventing heat from being released from the earth's surface—the "greenhouse effect."

The warming climate won't mean the end of snow, or even the end of "respectable snow," as Scripps Institution of Oceanograhpy and U.S. Geological Survey climatologist Dan Cayan calls it.

It will, though, mean the end of consistent snowfall at the lower elevations at which Mammoth Mountain has built much of its infrastructure, like Canyon Lodge, which tops out at 8,343 feet in elevation.

"Sixty years from now, we are expecting

a 2 degree Celsius increase (3.6 degrees Farenheit), meaning the snow level will retreat by about 1,000 feet in elevation," Cayan said. "Where you now have reliable snow at about 8,000 feet most of the winter, you will have reliable snow at about 9,000 feet by 2060."

Farther out than that, the prognosis is even gloomier.

"By 2100, the Sierra snowpack will be less than half of what it is now," he said.

It's not just the amount of snow that will change locally, said Dr. Jessica Lundquist, an associate professor for the University of Washington, who has spent many of her research years working on climate change effects in the Eastern Sierra.

Almost everything will change.

For example, according to Lundquist: winter will come later and leave sooner—something that has already happened in the American West; insects, like the bark beetle, once kept in check by extremely cold winter nights, will multiply, hitting already drought-stressed trees and killing more and more of them; and algae in high country lakes and streams will increase, robbing the water of oxygen that world-class trout fisheries depend on.

Local botanist Michele Slaton, Ph.D in botany and a GIS specialist with the Inyo National Forest, is in the thick of the local debate and conversation about what will happen in the Eastern Sierra in the future.

The two million acre Inyo National Forest, which holds almost all of the land above tree line in the region, including the land under Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, is currently in the process of rewriting its Forest Plan, something it does every 20 years. Slaton is helping to write the climate change portion of the document.

She is already seeing the effects now, on the ground.

"It's amazing that you can almost see it," she said. "The vegetation is changing, it's moving northward toward colder latitudes. By 2060, the things we take for granted in this landscape will not be the same."

For example, more drought tolerant trees will replace some of the big red firs, like those in Reds Meadow.

Sagebrush and pinyon pines will spread into meadows as the water table drops and the meadows dry up.

Fires will become more frequent, and probably larger, because the fuel they have to burn will be drier and the fire season will be longer.

The Mojave Desert, which begins south of Lone Pine with the first evidence of creosote bushes, will begin in Big Pine.

"These are things we have a high degree of confidence about," Slaton said.

When it comes to animals, however, the situation is far more fungible.

"Our biggest unknown is biological—what are individual species going to do?" she said.

"History shows they don't move together across the landscape in ways we can predict, nor do they do so easily."

So what is a ski area—and entire region—that depends heavily on long, snowy winters, to do?

It's not all gloom and doom

Glum as the news is, the Sierra—and Mammoth Mountain—might weather the climate change challenges better than the rest of the country's great mountain ranges; the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains, Lundquist said.

"The Sierra has an advantage and that is its incredible diversity," she said.

The Eastern Sierra—with its sharp and fast elevation changes, its many different ecosystems packed together, will give species more options to move or adapt, as opposed to the Rockies where one kind of tree (lodgepole) makes up the huge bulk of the forest there.

For example, when a plant-specific insect hits a massive lodgepole forest, like the bark beetles which have decimated vast swathes of the lodgepole pine forest in the Rockies, there are few other kinds of trees nearby that could possibly move in after the lodgepoles are gone.

In California, however, a short drive can take you through five different kinds of ecosystems, meaning at least some plants and animals are likely to survive a warming planet—and some may even thrive.

This "resiliency"—and as much as possible, building more of it into the ecosystems of the Eastern Sierra—is Slaton and the Inyo National Forest's main goal.

"All we can do is try to build in resiliency, here. That's what we are doing now, trying to use fire and vegetation management to create more resilient ecosystems," Slaton said.

Back on Mammoth Mountain, chief operations officer Greg Dallas said Mountain management isn't using the words "global warming."

He prefers the term "more variability" for what's happening to ski areas across the world.

"What we know for certain is there is a lot more variability," he said. "And we are paying attention. It's something we talk about, a lot."

"In the past, even as recently as the 2000s, everyone just expected it to snow," he said. "Now, there is a very different discussion happening."

If you go to Europe, he said, "clearly the base facilities have had to move up the mountains."

Locally, the infestation of bark beetle-killed trees on June Mountain is a concern to MMSA, he said; an infestation that many scientists say is related to warmer temperatures.

The key is to plan for "sustainability," he said. "We need to plan for it if it snows 600 inches or 40 inches," he said. "Vail is a good example; they are putting a lot more emphasis on summer."

Mammoth Mountain and the town of Mammoth have to get much better at tapping the summer and shoulder season opportunities, he said, noting that although the two entities have not had formal talks about climate change, they are talking about shoulder season marketing plans together.

"We believe that whatever happens, people are still going to want to recreate in a beautiful mountain area," he said.

Like Slaton, he noted that Mammoth Mountain and the state of California have an advantage in knowledge when it comes to adapting to increased variability.

"In California, we never were completely dependent on consistent snow, unlike some of the resorts in the Rockies," he said, pointing to Mammoth Mountain's historic lack of "normal" winters; winters are often wildly wet—or the opposite.

"Our elevation gives us a great advantage," he said, noting ski areas around Tahoe start off several thousand feet lower than Mammoth.

"Now, we are talking about everything from what kind of transportation from the base facility we are planning (gondola versus chairlifts, etc.) to where do we put new lifts and facilities."

"We have to weatherpoof this place," he said.

LESSONS from WINTER CAMPING in JUNE-UARY

Story by **Alex Garcia**
Photos by **Jesse Barlet**

I've always wanted to figure out the whole winter camping thing, but it's not the friendliest activity to just dive head first in.

Spending the night in the frozen wilderness has the potential to be extremely rewarding if you know what you're doing and extremely miserable if you don't.

I thought this season would be a good time to learn, seeing as access is at an all-time high with the sorry snowpack this January.

Right around New Years, I drove up McGee Mountain with a buddy. I had never driven the switchbacks before that, but have always been intrigued by them while driving south on U.S. 395. Besides the awfully thin sections and the terrible, terrible thoughts of "what if" peering down the ever steepening cliff-side of the dirt and rock laden road, it's fairly mellow in terms of a 4x4 trail.

Just don't slip. Concentrate.

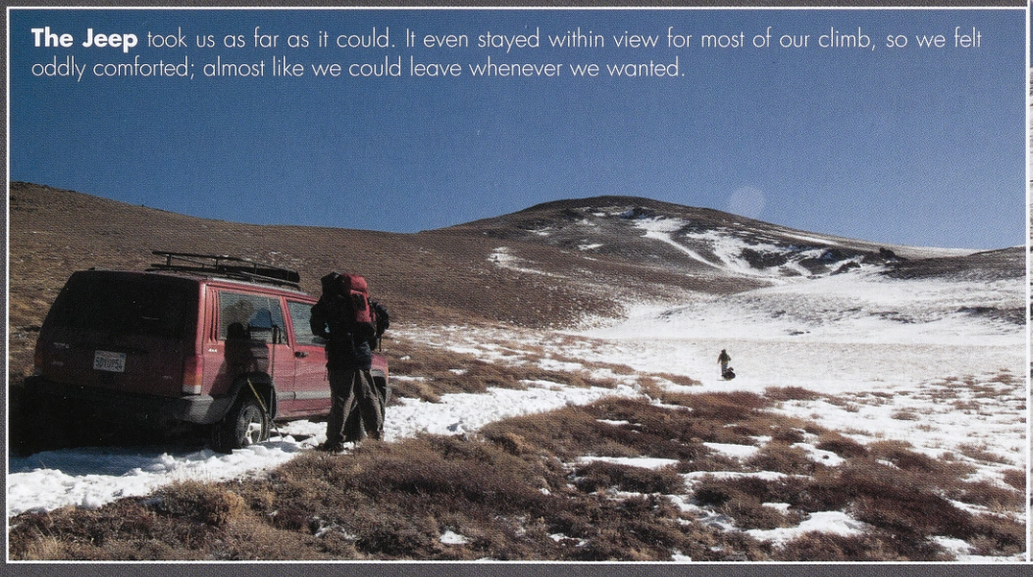
As the road flattened out, the landscape begins to reveal itself. Snowdrifts cover the remainder of the road about a quarter mile after you top out.

Keep in mind that in a normal snow year, you wouldn't be able to climb your vehicle that high.

Due to the lack of snow this winter, we were able to escape to complete wilderness with only a short 1-2 miles of travel on the snow. As much as this was a snow camping trip, I looked at it as a test drive for a true snow camping trip in the future.

I connected with my buddies, Jesse and Mark, the night before. I didn't want to be too organized; the more chaos during

Above: **The climb** up isn't for those afraid of heights. Below: **Mark** was on the first shift for pulling the sled with the supplies.



The Jeep took us as far as it could. It even stayed within view for most of our climb, so we felt oddly comforted; almost like we could leave whenever we wanted.

our trial, the better prepared we'd be for a serious trip.

By the time we finally set out, it was nearly noon. It turned out we had forgotten a few crucial items—a dog jacket for Jesse's short coated dog, Zeppelin, topping that list.

Additionally, we threw a few things on the Jeep's roof rack; a sleeping pad for Mark, extra water and some firewood. Mark would be even more grateful than Zeppelin that we had turned around.

It was already close to 1:30p.m. by the time our packs were on our backs and snowshoes on our feet.

We set out west across the wind-crusted and drought ravaged rolling hills on the top of McGee. The dogs traveled weightlessly, while we humans, despite our snowshoes, punched through to nearly a foot of sugary facets with every step.

As we hiked the gentle grade to the next plateau, we fantasized aloud about riding the wavy results of what we could only extrapolate to be the violent winds during the region's only major snowfall in nearly 13 months.

The features, worthy of belonging in a skatepark and molded of concrete, would only be shreddable with the sharpest of edges. This stuff was bulletproof.

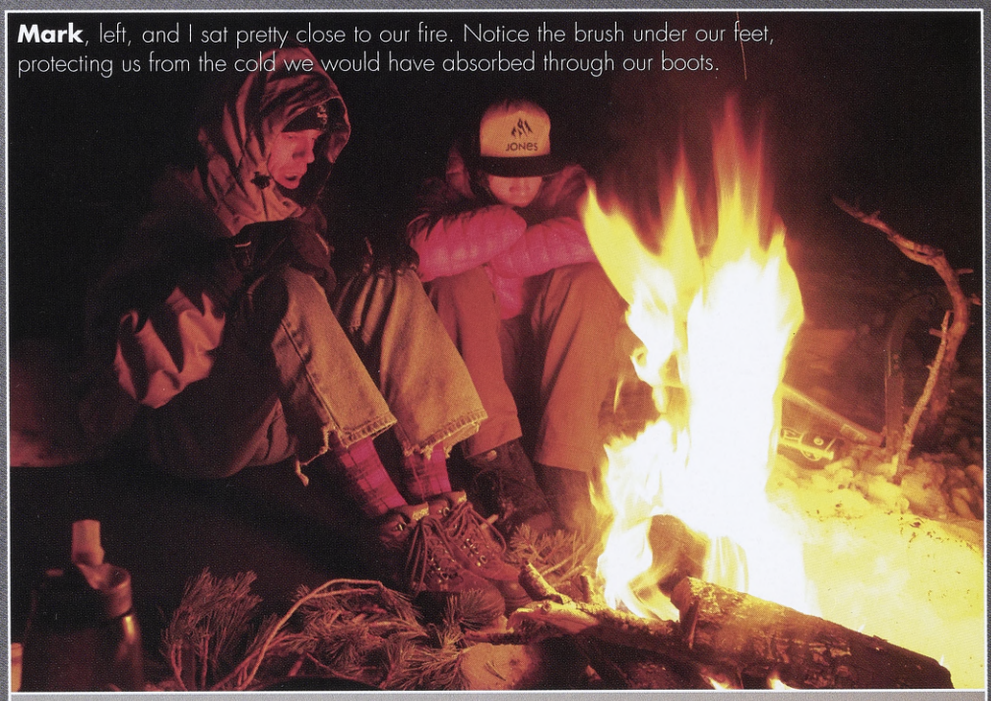
We looked up at the sun and figured we maybe had about two-and-a-half-hours of daylight remaining, and even less time than that protected from the shade cast over us by Mt. Morrison in the distance.

Once the sun began to disappear, the moon began to rise in what turned into a spectacular alpenglow; bringing with it the plummeting temperatures of night.

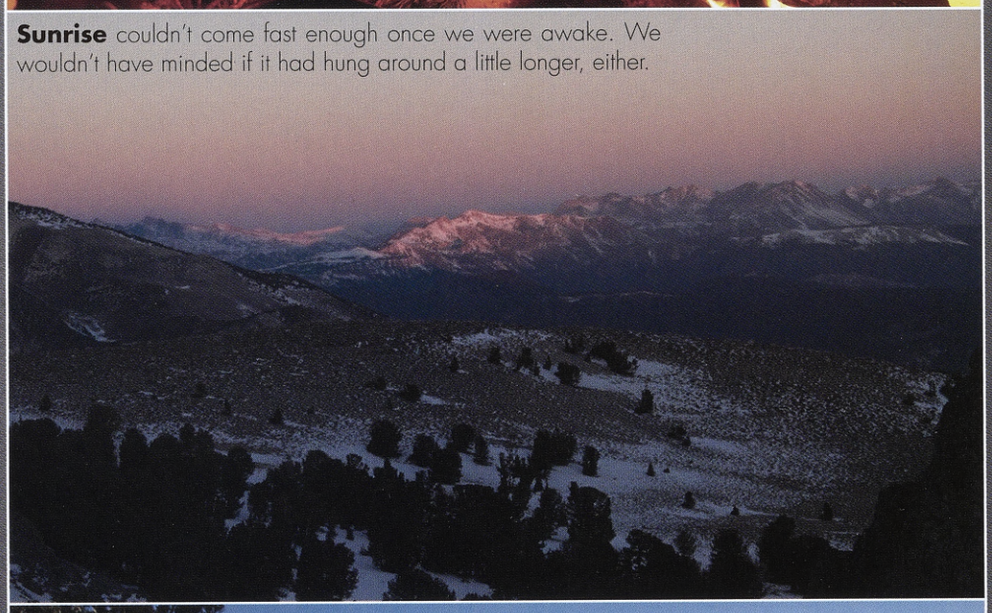
After removing and strapping our snowshoes on and off a few times due to sections covered in sharp rocks, dirt and a disheartening absence of snow, we found a solid area worthy of camp.

It was on a slope with trees sheltering us from the wind and on about 18 inches of snow. That is, if you wanted to call it snow—I preferred to describe the conditions as "crust on dust."

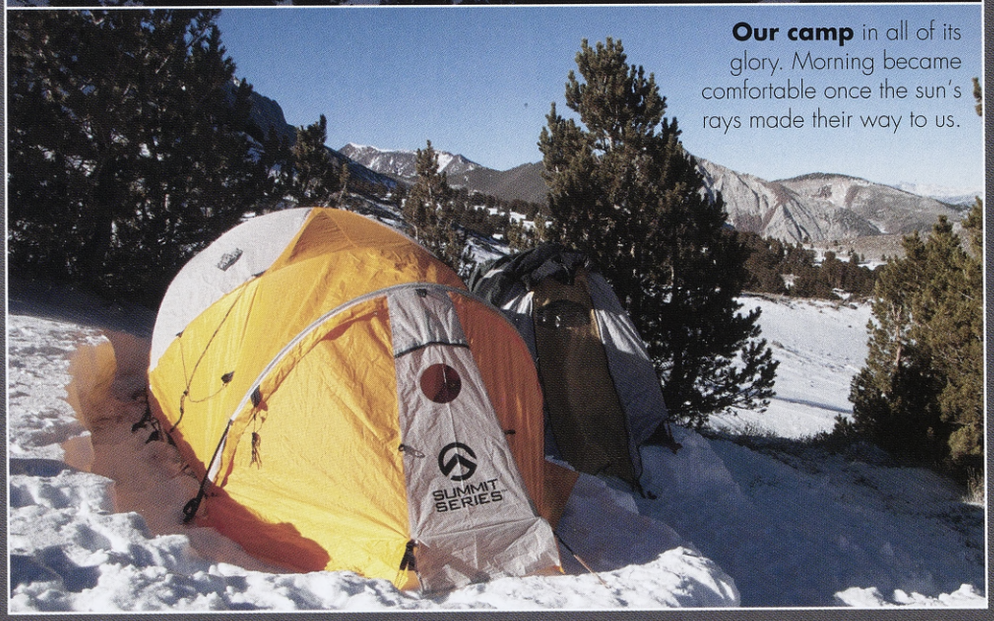
By now we realized our timing, however unintended, was just barely perfect and we instantly went into work mode. Mark and Jesse gathered wood and kindling from beneath the surrounding trees and



Mark, left, and I sat pretty close to our fire. Notice the brush under our feet, protecting us from the cold we would have absorbed through our boots.



Sunrise couldn't come fast enough once we were awake. We wouldn't have minded if it had hung around a little longer, either.



Our camp in all of its glory. Morning became comfortable once the sun's rays made their way to us.

proceeded to create a small hearth for our campfire.

While they were gone, I stomped out a footprint for the two tents. This proved to be harder than I thought, as with every stomp of my snowshoes, I unleased the facets beneath the wind crust, creating desert-like sand conditions instead of a solid, packed surface. It looked pretty, but any weight without snowshoes would yield cold shins, as that's how far you would sink.

Once the tents were up, we changed into campsite clothes, which for me included some new Christmas base layers and a synthetic puffy jacket. Those articles along with the fire were enough to stay warm, though my feet would tell you otherwise.

We found wearing our snowshoes around camp accomplished two things: first, it insulated the soles of our feet from the snow and second, it prevented us from sinking in the quicksand-like snow.

We feasted on sausages (12 to be exact), hot cocoa, and Fireball whiskey. Our stomachs would have protested had they had a say in things, but we were indifferent. We wanted energy and a warm buzz.

The firewood we had hauled in on the plastic sled was depleted by 8:30 p.m. and therefore it was bed time. We were tired, the dogs were tired and our only source of heat was fleeing even faster than the temperature outside was dropping.

The night seemed to last forever.

We didn't equip ourselves with a thermometer, but it had to have been in the low 20s by 10 p.m. and well into the teens by the early morning. It was definitely as cold as it would have been during any normal winter, that's for sure.

Our water, as well as a single apple and orange, were frozen solid by the time my pup Keiko, as well as Zeppelin, woke us up slightly before 6 a.m. Thinking it was still deep in the night, we were reluctant to start moving without the sun, but slowly and surely, light crept over the hills in front of us and bled down the mountains behind us and illuminated the tent.

We didn't do a very good job at calculating where the first light would be;

Top & middle: **The Snurfer** made an appearance, although the snow wasn't very cooperative. Maybe I just didn't know how to snurf. Above: **Sledding** is still fun. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Background: **Rewards** on top of McGee Mountain, looking down into McGee Canyon.

our camp sat in the early morning shadows for at least an hour and a half.

Having run through our fire fuel, we resorted to the dead sagebrush a little ways away and were pleased to see how well it burned. It was able to boil water from snow, heat our drinking ice back into water and even cook the remainder of the sausages and some oatmeal for breakfast.

After eating and thawing ourselves out with the fire and hot tea, we decided to take a hike along the back ridge of McGee.

This was the small reward for us.

The scenery behind McGee Mountain that morning was incredible. On a decent snow year, the riding would have been unrivaled by anything on the ski hill.

This is what winter camping is about—what you're able to achieve first thing in the morning, right outside of your doorstep and your energy levels far less affected by the approach.

Time to plan for the real deal.

OTHER LESSONS

In addition to the basic backcountry skills you'll need, this is what I learned:

Temps: Unless it sleeps in your bag with you, assume it will freeze.

Tents: Condensation turns into little ice crystals on the inside of your tent. When you knock the sides of the tent, it will snow on you. Despite the compromise in temperature, use the vents.

Footwear: Do not let your boots or socks become wet without a plan and means to ensure they dry. You don't want to shove already cold feet into ice cubes in the morning.

More on footwear: My "snow boots" will newly be referred to as "snow boots for around town." Unless I was in my bag, wearing snowshoes or in front of the fire, my feet were either cold or becoming cold.

Sun: The sun is your friend; make sure you set up a camp that will see him first thing in the morning.

Dogs: Keiko is built for this environment; Zeppelin is not. Know that difference and what your pet will need. (Dog boots, coat, etc.)

Dog Management: I had to hike around for close to an hour after breakfast in an attempt to locate Keiko after she strolled off on her own morning hike. While I knew she would eventually hear me and return, you better make sure your pet will do the same before you venture off searching in the winter. There isn't a quicker way to become lost on your own in the frozen wilderness, and out there the smallest mistake can be the difference between a mellow trip and your life.

More Dog Management: If the dogs fight, and one needs medical attention, you will be hiking out right away, whether it's convenient or not. Keiko and Zeppelin scuffled twice and luckily nothing serious came of either instance.

Fire: Freshly cut wood from live trees is a bad idea unless you're 100 percent desperate. This leaves you to forage for dead and dried fuel. This is exponentially harder when everything is covered by 5 or 10 or even 20 feet of snow. Know that before you rely on a fire for anything.

More fire: If burning wood touches the snow, it will smolder. Do what you can to prevent this scenario. You don't want to have to balance your proximity to the fire based on smoke you're willing to endure and heat you require.

Water: You need water. You'll dehydrate in the mountains in the winter faster than backpacking in the heat, but it won't be as obvious. If you plan on melting snow, know that the longer it has sat, the dirtier it probably is. Cover your boiling snow to shield it from ash and produce water faster.

Sweat: You'll work your ass off moving around and traveling in snow. You will sweat. Sweat will freeze. These facts should inspire your wardrobe.

HEAT from the GROUND
JUICE from the SUN

Mammoth homeowners turn to geo-thermal, solar energy

Story by **George Shirk**

A quiet, but powerful movement in home design is taking place before our very eyes.

Check that.

When builders and homeowners turn toward increasingly popular geo-thermal heating systems, and pair them to solar panels to generate electricity, it is not something that the casual observer would spot.

"It's invisible," said the leading installer of such systems in and around the Eastside.

"It's invisible and extremely reliable," said Bruce Sanguinetti, a self-described "geo-junkie" and the brains behind Sierra Eco Systems out of Genoa, Nev. "It's invisible and reliable, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for 20-to-25 years."

Sanguinetti's crew finished four such systems in Mammoth during the past year, and he said he has a number of projects on the drawing board—from medium-sized to large homes, along with bigger projects such as the 80|50 residential condo development in the Village, the Mammoth Community Water District headquarters and both the Mono County and Inyo County school districts.

A big question, however, is why it took so long for geo-thermal/solar systems to take hold.

The technology has been available for years, but the will to install such systems wasn't, he said.

Ten years ago, for example, the drive among home builders was to build a home, live in it for a while, or use it as a second home, then sell it.

He calls it the "seven-year itch," and in that kind of a market, he said, homeowners were hesitant to install a heating/electrical system that even today remains about double the price of installing a new conventional system.

Now, however, Sanguinetti said increasing numbers of people are building homes for the long haul, and are looking for a return on their investment (ROI) much further out.

How much further out?

"They're paying double [for the system], but the ROI is about 25 percent in as little as five years."

Sanguinetti said he saw the shift coming.

At 59 years of age, he is a retired Silicon Valley industrial and electrical engineer with multiple academic degrees in engineering and business, in which discipline he holds an MBA.

In the last several years, he said, the time was right to strike, and he left Silicon Valley to Genoa, south of Carson City on the California border.

"It's obvious to me that people want to live in a home and carefully control utility costs. It's not even an arguable point."

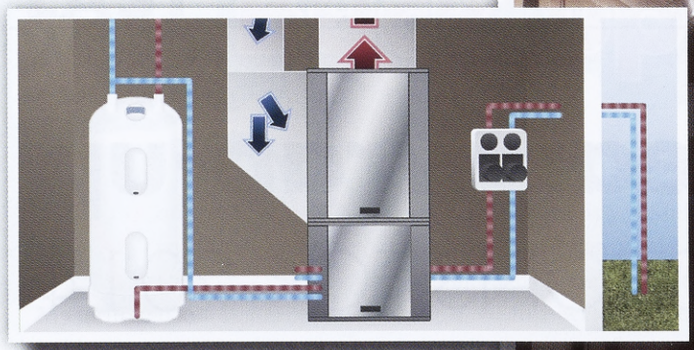
It's not arguable, at any rate, to the State of California Consumer Energy Center, among many state agencies driving toward a goal of a 30 percent reduction in energy costs by 2020.

"Geothermal energy is produced by the heat of the earth," the agency says in its website, "and is often associated with volcanic and seismically active regions. California has 25 known geothermal resource areas, 14 of which have underground water temperatures of 300 degrees Fahrenheit (149 degrees Celsius) or greater.

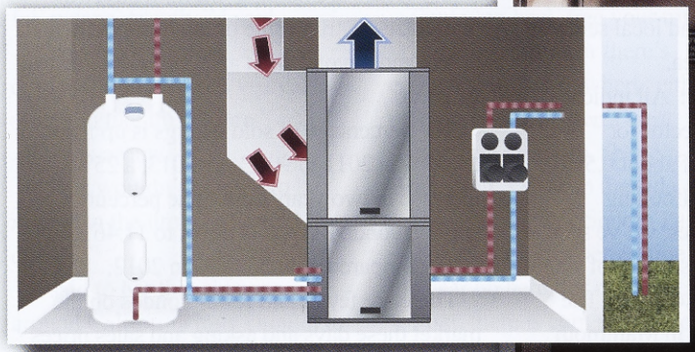
"Hot water and, in some instances, steam can be used to make electricity in large power plants. Hot water can also be put to direct use, such as heating greenhouses or other buildings.

"The constant temperature below ground

HEATING CYLCE



COOLING CYLCE



can also be tapped to warm and cool your home through a ground-source heat pump."

That is the main incentive behind home builders who currently are contracting homes in The Bluffs, Juniper Ridge and in the Canyon/Village areas of Mammoth.

The most developed of the high-temperature resource areas of the state is the Geysers, north of San Francisco.

The Geysers was first tapped as a geothermal resource to generate electricity in 1960. It is one of only two locations in the world where a high-temperature, dry steam is found that can be directly used to turn turbines and generate electricity (the other being Larderello, Italy).

Other major geothermal locations in the state include the Imperial Valley area east of San Diego and the Coso Hot Springs area near Bakersfield.

The two other forms of geothermal energy—hot dry rock and magma—have the potential to provide thousands of megawatts.

The state cites recent investigations in hot dry rock were focused in the Clear Lake area of Lake County, and magma research in the Long Valley Caldera.

The Town of Mammoth Lakes itself tapped into the geothermal possibilities when it built a heat pump under one lane of the "Voo-Doo Chute," the dangerous patch of Lakeview Blvd. that bedeviled winter drivers for years as they made their way down or up from Lake Mary Road.

Under the engineering wand of then-Public Works Director Ray Jarvis, the town installed a geo-thermal-ready heat pump. Although the pump is not yet active—currently the road is heated by propane pumps—it was engineered to make the switchover fairly easy.

The second piece to the utility puzzle is solar energy.

Several homes in and around Mammoth already tap into solar, feeding the power back into the power grid to reduce electrical costs.

With energy costs as top-of-mind as they always are, Mammoth seems to be sitting on a terrific energy source.

All it took was the market forces to swivel just a bit toward long-range investment, and the entry of a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, to create a new way of building homes.

End of year wrap-up
AND PROJECTIONS FOR 2014

Story by **Lauren Tracy**
Manager & Realtor-Associate,
Mammoth Lakes Realty, Inc.

As we say goodbye to 2013 it is a good time to take a look at what happened this year in our local real estate market and make some predictions for 2014.

I will be looking at the raw MLS (Multiple Listing Service) data from 2011-2013 for Mono County as a whole to review our current trends that we can expect to see continue.

Here are some of the key indicators that our market is improving:

Vacant Land: The key indicator of growth in land sales is a huge jump in the average sold price of lots in 2013 at $345,546, over $248,702 in 2012 and $154,412 in 2011.

That's a whopping 123.78% increase in sales price over two years time. Incredible! The total number of lot sales has more than doubled from 2011 to 2013 with only 24 lot sales in 2011 vs. 56 lot sales in 2013.

The largest decrease in days on market occurred in this sector of our market, with average total days on market dropping from 450 days in 2012 to 324 days in 2013. That's a 28% decrease in total days on market of sold lots in our area.

The total percentage of lots on the market that sold in 2013 is up to 36.36%, up from 19.83% in 2011. The percent of expired listings is down to 50.65% over 59.23% in 2012 and 90.08% in 2011.

We currently have 11 active permits in Mammoth Lakes for new construction. Building is back in the area and local sentiment is strong for growth in this area.

Residential Single Family: All indicators and trends are strong in this sector for moderate continued growth of about 0.5% - 1.0% per month into 2014. Looking specifically at Mammoth Lakes, we've seen a 9.4% increase in average sales prices of single family residences from 2012 to 2013. The average sales price of a home in Mammoth is up to $797,454 for 2013 over $728,874 in 2012.

In our total MLS market for Mono County, we've seen an 11.6% increase in average sales prices in 2013 over 2012. I expect that this trend will continue into 2014, my prediction being a 6% to 10% increase in average sales price overall. A few other signals of strengthening in the sector are an increase in the percentage of sold listings up from 53.28% in 2011 to 72.24% in 2013.

The percentage of expired listings is also down from 39.89% in 2011 to 26.09% in 2013.

Condominiums: The biggest indicator that we are in a seller's market can be seen in the condo market. The sale price/list price ratio continues to be the strongest in the condo market the last three years running, with a ratio of 95.87% for 2013.

Many highly upgraded condos are on the market lately for higher than average prices, showing that sellers are still trying to skirt the appraisal issue and some have been successful. Many sellers are holding out for a buyer to recognize the true value of the improvements above and beyond what an appraisal value can generate.

The percentage of sold listings is up from 64.65% in 2011 to 90.1% in 2013, a 25% increase in two years time. The percent of expired condo listings is down to 11.46% in 2013 compared with 33.82% in 2012.

There are fewer and fewer condos on the market these days and asking and sales prices are continuing to test new levels and push into the pricing seen in 2010 and 2009. The average sold price of a condo in our market is up to $332,992 in 2013 over $292,520 in 2012, a 13.84% increase for the year.

I expect to see a continuation of higher sales prices as inventory is extremely low in this sector of the market and sellers are pushing for higher prices, often above what appraisals will generate.

Final Thoughts: Due to the extremely low inventory in the area and increasing buyer activity during a normally slow time of year, the outlook is good for increasing prices in the area. Many buyers are waiting for the "right deal" to come onto the market these days and we do expect to have some remaining short sales and distressed properties on the market in the next 12 months.

As long as interest rates remain low, we should continue to see steady growth throughout the year.

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LAST WORD
with Bump Diamond

Buck up, buckaroo

"You are looking particularly wistful today."

My girlfriend knows me better than I know me, most of the time. At least this one does.

"I don't even know what 'wistful' means, exactly," I said.

"You seem a little down in the dumps. I don't think I've ever seen you like this before."

"Stick around."

"This wouldn't happen to be related to the drought around here, does it?"

I said to her that I'd been around California long enough to understand about the vicissitudes of weather-related hoo-hah.

"It's not the first time we've gone through this," I said, "and with a short spring skiing season, I figure that's a good thing, maybe, for an early start on the hiking season."

"I'm not buying it," she said. "For nine months you talk about spring skiing. You'd think it was the only reason why you're alive, as weird as that is."

"If that were true, and it isn't, then I'd just pick up every spring and go where the snow is deep, plentiful and safe."

"Yeah. Like New York City."

She is right, of course,

Even I admit to a foul mood. It's hard to live in California. The whole place is a fantasy. Neither of the two most important cities have their own water supply, and the Valley doesn't either. When it's good, it's very, very good, but this snow year hasn't been so good.

The snow stopped, basically, after the 2012 holiday season. The rain, such as it was, stopped last spring. The snow this year didn't come down like it can, either.

All through the early winter months, we free-heelers looked skyward, pretty much figuring that we'd all have plenty of snow for the corn season.

Free your heel, free your mind.

Even in a thin year there's enough snow, somewhere, either here or down the Sierra crest southward. Or north, above Bridgeport. Or off to the side, up on Monitor Pass or Sonora Pass.

There's hardly a better time of the year up here, for my money.

First, there is corn snow, the most amazing ski snow there is. Anyone can find it at the resort, too, once you get used to which slopes are getting hit by sunlight, and at what times of the day.

But the resort being the resort, the really great snow gets skied out pretty fast.

Anyway, the resort is noisy, comparatively speaking.

For guys like me, the perfect spring skiing is a combination of quiet forests, wide-open fields of snow, physical work, long days and pretty girls.

It's really not too much to ask for, except when California is being California.

The very first year I heard about how tough it could be, was in the early 1990s, when I first came out here. People used to talk about 1983-84, which at the time was the popular standard for crummy conditions. The Sierra got a couple of feet of snow in March, and then nothing more.

Over time, a lot of us have gotten used to the idea that there is no such thing as an "average" snowpack. We either have a lot of it or we have none of it, and there doesn't seem to be a happy medium.

"Yeah, I'm a little down," I said. "All the usual stuff. But I'll take what we have and make the best of it. We might have enough spring skiing over the next couple of months to satisfy my bones. Hard to tell."

"Buck up, buckaroo," she said in that way she has. "No use sitting around being an Eeyore, especially if you've seen all this before."

"You are absolutely right," I said. "Let's go for a hike."

Illustration by Jesse Barlet

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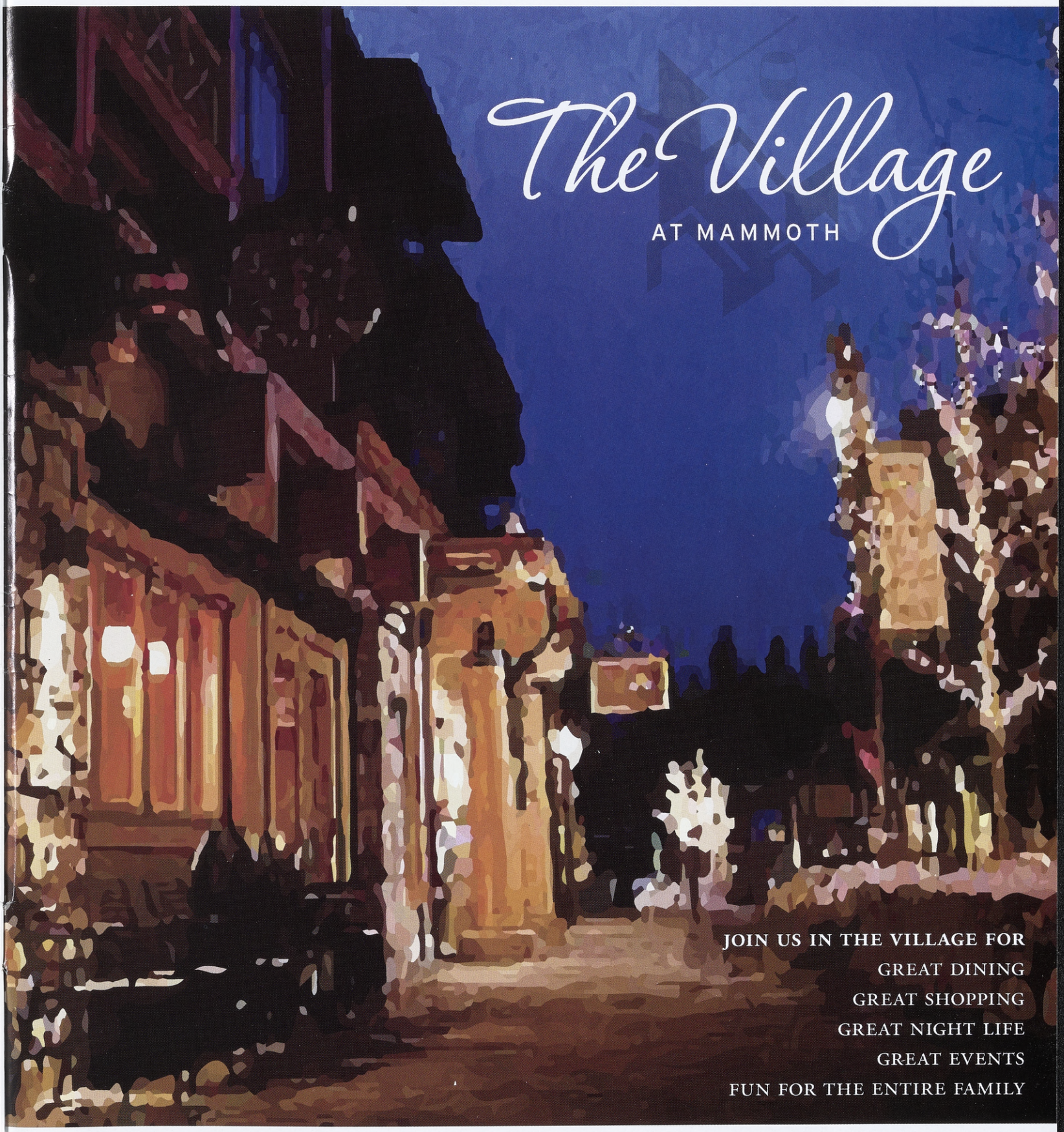

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